

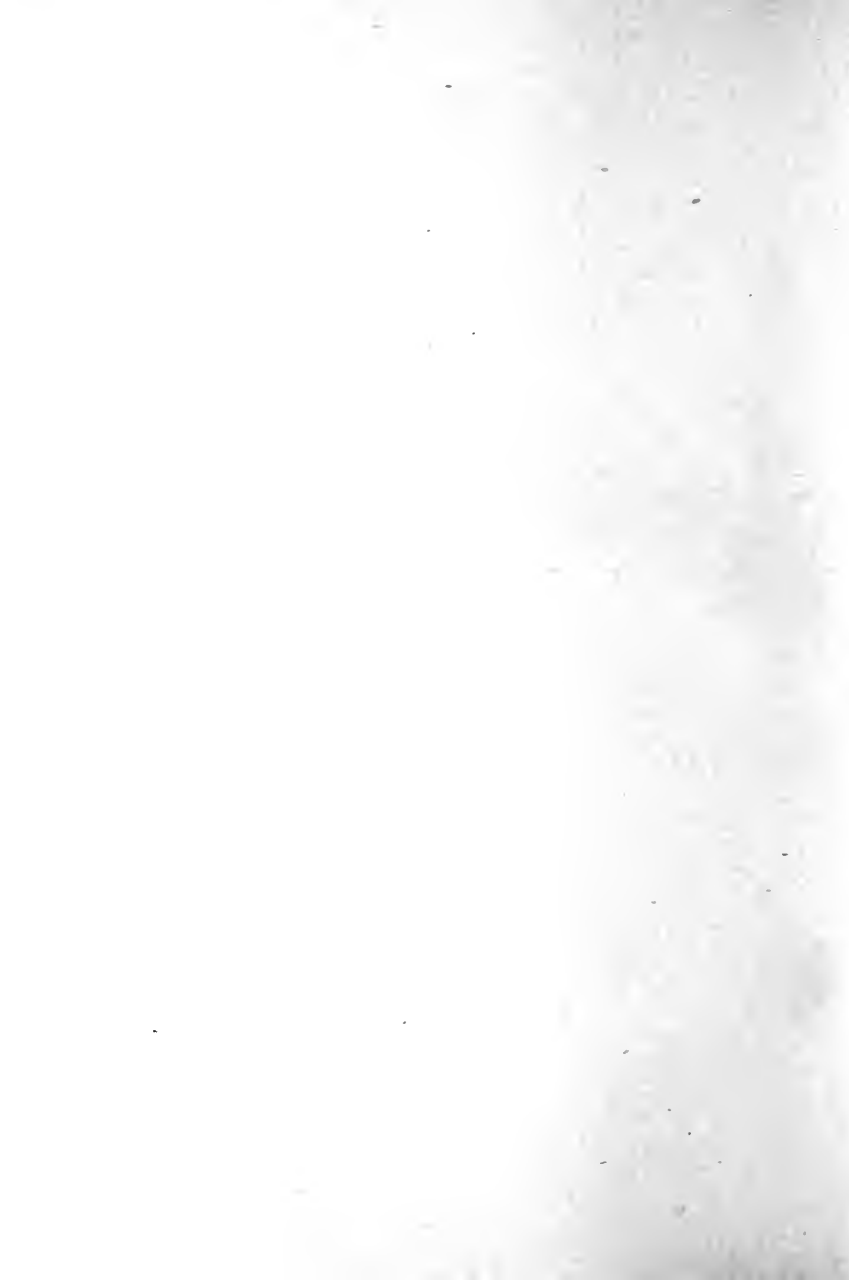
THE CHURCHYARD

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THE CHURCHYARD SCRIBE,

BY

ALFRED STAPLETON.



- I. ON RECORDING THE INSCRIPTIONS
IN A CHURCHYARD OR BURIAL
GROUND.
- II. HINTS ON READING APPARENTLY
ILLEGIBLE INSCRIPTIONS.
- III. TYPICAL AND AUTHENTIC EXAMPLES



1908.

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The Churchyard Scribe.

I.

ON RECORDING THE INSCRIPTIONS IN A CHURCHYARD OR BURIAL GROUND.

The Destruction of Irreplaceable Records.

Evidence has been published repeatedly as to the wholesale destruction or mis-application—say as paving material—of grave-stones, and even the utter erasure of some burial grounds, with all their memorials. Disused graveyards have often been looted shamelessly, with the result that, even at the present day, monumental stones are apt to be discovered in the most unlikely places. So universal, indeed, have been these mal-

practices in the past, that it is questionable whether a parish exists where instances have not occurred. Churchyards and cemeteries in towns have suffered extensively by curtailment, etc., in connection with improvements and building operations, and but rarely are the displaced memorials preserved. Moreover, few have any adequate idea of the extent to which such destruction is going on at the present day in connection with church restorations and churchyard renovations. Excepting, perhaps, some unusually good specimens, church floor-stones frequently are cleared away when it is decided to lay a smart pavement of tilework, and it is noteworthy that the published accounts of church improvements, though they make much of any antiquarian feature spared, are silent as to what is destroyed. The beautifying of churchyards, the planting of shrubs, the laying-out of flower-beds, and the making of substantial paths also are answerable for

much havoc. Sometimes the obstructive stones are removed altogether, sometimes they are buried where nobody will ever take the trouble to disinter them, and yet, again, they may be incorporated in the pavement, in which case they soon become illegible. At times, as when a slice is taken from a burial ground in connection with some improvement, insult is added to injury by replacing destroyed memorials by collective new memorials, recording only bare lists of names and dates. Numberless instances may be cited of all these practices, involving the destruction of an enormous mass of information.* It seems almost a pity that there is not a law rendering compulsory the preservation of copies of destroyed inscriptions. This surely would involve no great hardship.

In addition to the above-mentioned causes there is the crumbling of memorials incessant and inevitable everywhere—the result of time

* See "Notes and Queries," 10th August, 1907, p. 118.

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and weather—so it must be conceded that every encouragement should be extended to such as are willing to lend a hand at rescuing what still remains.

That passing reference is made above to monuments in churches is true, and, no doubt, there is much work needing attention there. Nevertheless, apart from the fact that “indoor” monuments already are recorded largely—and in numerous cases completely—the enormously greater number of “out-door” monuments is comparatively unrecorded. There are numberless churchyards and burial grounds wherefrom no single inscription ever has been printed. It is an inexplicable fact that, in the past, even the parish historian commonly shunned the churchyard, albeit hard pressed for matter, though recent years have witnessed a decided improvement in this direction, as also in that of adding inscriptions as appendices to printed parish registers.

There is urgent need that this kind of work be taken in hand all over the country, both in regard to churchyards (a term which in this work, for convenience, is frequently used in a sense applicable to any outdoor place of interment) and to Nonconformist burial grounds.

**The Loss
to Middle-class
Families.**

In bygone days usually there existed a distinct line of demarcation between the classes interred in the church and those interred in the churchyard, because the latter could not pay for the privilege. But the burials in the churchyard must have outnumbered those in the church by 100 to 1, and as at the present day the influential and governing classes so largely are drawn, directly or indirectly, from the lower ranks, the importance of these plebeian records cannot be gainsaid in association with genealogical investigations. There was a time when it

would have been considered presumption for other than titled or landed families to frame pedigrees, but cast-iron tables of wholly flawless ancestors, invented at a time when critics were not, have ceased to monopolise the field. Nowadays a countless new race claims its share in the pride of ancestry, one that has initiated the modern system of printing parish-registers verbatim, and takes an increasing interest in authentic graveyard literature.

**The Need of
Systematic
Rescue-work.**

Although humorous epitaphs—many of which never appeared on any grave-stone—have been printed and reprinted on numberless occasions, and although books of selected epitaphs are many, few are the books or *real* epitaphs accurately and systematically recorded.

It should, however, be mentioned that for the last twenty years the Association

for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland* has published a Journal, which contains inscriptions from tombstones and tablets from all parts of Ireland, with illustrations of the more important ones. Owing to the absence of early parish registers in Ireland (with the exception of Dublin), these inscriptions are often the only means of tracing Irish pedigrees. Descriptions are given, and frequently illustrations, of all arms inscribed, amplified by notes from wills, funeral entries, and other records, accompanied by notes contributed by well known genealogists. The Journal, in addition, contains notes and queries relating to genealogy and heraldry. Till the end of 1906 the Association has published six volumes, with a full index to each, and these are undoubtedly of the greatest assistance to those who are interested in

* Founded in 1888 by the late Colonel P. D. Vigors, of Holloden, Bagenalstown, County Carlow.

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the genealogy, heraldry, and archæology of Ireland. With Volume VII. of the Journal there has been commenced the publication of some Funeral Certificates (or Entries) which have been specially transcribed for the Journal from the original manuscript volume now in the British Museum. It is intended to give illustrations of all the arms that are in the manuscript. Lord Walter FitzGerald, M.R.I.A., Kilkea Castle, Mageney, County Kildare, is the Honorary Editor, and Mr. E. R. M'Clintock Dix, M.R.I.A., 17, Kildare Street, Dublin, the Honorary Treasurer.

An English Society, under the title of "The National Society for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in England" unfortunately existed for only a few years.

Another Association doing excellent work of this nature is the East Herts Archæological Society, the Council of

which informs me that the recording of all the memorials it has been found possible to decipher in the churches and churchyards, chapels and burial-grounds has now been completed for the following parishes :

Ardeley, Aslwell, Bygrave, Caldecote, Clothall, Cottered, Hinxworth, Kelshall, Newnham, Norton, Radwell, Reed, Rushden, Sandon, Therfield and Wallington, all in the Hundred of Odsey.

Albury, Anstey, Aspenden, Barkway, Barley, Buckland, Buntingford, Much Hadham, Little Hadham, Great Hornead, Little Hornead, Layston, Meesden, Brent Pelham, Furneaux Pelham, Stocking Pelham, Throcking and Wyddial, all in the Hundred of Edwinstree.

They have been carefully transcribed, an index of names prepared, and bound in volumes which may be freely consulted in the Honorary Secretary's Library, Ivy

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Lodge, Bishop's Stortford, or inquiries will be answered if a stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.

It is hoped that the Hundred of Hitchin will be completed next year. The recording of the Hundreds of Braughing, Broadwater and Hertford is in an advanced stage, and it is satisfactory to report that a beginning has been made with the more western Hundreds of Cashio and Dacorum.

The lists, which contain much information additional to that contained in the parish registers, are of great value to the historian and genealogist, and the Honorary Secretary, Mr. W. B. Gerish, informs me that he receives a large number of inquiries for information.

There is no walk of antiquarian research so little trodden with intelligence, nor one which affords such numerous opportunities for original research as the accurate and

systematic recording of epitaphs. Funny rhymes are very well in their way, but latter-day students are apt to find better entertainment in that portion of a monumental inscription supplying solid information, such as the ordinary run of epitaph collectors generally ignores. The modern worker, indeed, is not likely to find many new examples of the type printed in popular epitaph books, but he will, nevertheless, occasionally light upon rare gems of unconscious humour, and likewise he will make many other discoveries, such as will afford probably a more abiding satisfaction than is to be extracted from puns and witticisms.

The modern need is not for selections of humorous or specially noteworthy items, nor indeed for selections of any kind, but for exhaustive transcripts or abstracts of all inscriptions existing in the churchyard or burial-ground searched. Every stone should be accounted for, whether legible

or illegible*—and even parts of such stones as are incomplete.

**An Interesting
Hobby open
to all.**

A peculiar recommendation for the task of transcribing or calendaring the inscriptions in graveyards is that, unlike any other branch of antiquarian work, not excepting even the transcription of parish registers, it may be undertaken by volunteers without previous experience, or, indeed, any special knowledge. For this reason, the task is a particularly suitable one for residents in country districts, who are denied ready access to libraries or works of reference, the essentials being time, industry, and scrupulous care. Whatever further information may be required I hope will be found in these pages. Though at times monotonous, it is a hobby extremely

* Many workers, I fear, will differ from me here. It is true that an absolutely illegible stone appears to be valueless, and yet—some plain stones to my knowledge are simply upside down, others, illegible to an inexperienced, careless or tired scribe, will yield information to a keener one; and, again, others may be identified by tradition or by earlier transcripts or records.

useful, healthy, and fascinating, and the results are interesting to others as well as to genealogists.

Those without experience of monumental inscriptions are prone to remind us that such a thing as a burial register exists, and, consequently, to question the utility of transcribing that which strikes them as merely a secondary record of a portion of some data already accessible. The best method of meeting objections of this sort is to invite attention to actual examples of the two forms of record side by side. Though, as we all know, some inscriptions give no further information than is contained in the register (except, of course, for the circumstance that the stone usually indicates the position of the grave, and states the date of death instead of the comparatively unimportant date of burial), these are but the exceptions that prove the rule.

As a matter of fact, probably quite nine out of ten monuments convey additional information, while it is by no means unusual for the record on stone to yield six times as much information as the parchment one, particularly before the period when the registers commenced to notify ages. When burial-registers are missing, the value of monumetal records is proportionately greater. I have found a series of inscriptions on one tomb to cover a period of more than two centuries—a pedigree in itself.

It would be idle to deny that monumetal inscriptions frequently contain errors. It is not unusual, for instance, to find the incised record and the written one at variance; and in spite of the numberless faults and omissions of old registers, one cannot presume to apportion the respective degrees of culpability, but inscriptions at least were cut without undue haste, from

data supplied by relatives or other well-informed parties.

Intending workers need labour under no uncertainty regarding the thorough utility of transcripts, as brief experience will suffice to convince them.

The hobby is not an
Its Expense. expensive one. All that
is required is the price of
note-books, pencils, and perhaps railway
fares to and from the scene of one's labours.
Neither costly works of reference nor other
equipment of any description will be necessary, but it is as well to warn the intending
searcher that his chief requisite will be
much patience in deciphering inscriptions
which at the first glance appear to be
illegible.

Mr. Gerish tells me that he prefers a more complete outfit. Instead of note books, he uses a packet of waste slips of paper (finding 6 in. by 3 in., or thereabouts, the

most convenient size), and then to pencils he adds two or three "scrapers" (old plane blades, procurable from stalls, which retail secondhand ironware, at threepence each, or painter's scrapers, if preferred), a large nail brush (or small scrubbing brush), an old penknife, a couple of dusters, and a magnifying glass.

**Its Pecuniary
Profit.**

Though this may not be the place to speak of it, I am sure that such as cannot afford to give their time for nothing may find a remunerative side to this pursuit. At least, it is reasonable to suppose that accurate copies will be of value in the future, when vast numbers of inscriptions now existing are gone for ever.

A large, well-indexed, reliable manuscript collection of monumental inscriptions drawn from all parts of the country should, therefore, have a steadily increasing commercial value as a whole, and it might be possible to

recover at any rate the cost of its production by charging genealogists a small fee for consulting it for transcripts relating to any given surname.

**Conditions,
Ideal and
Otherwise.**

The ideal conditions under which the work may be carried on are to be found in remote rural churchyards, where "improvements" have never been attempted, and where one can best assimilate the spirit of Gray's immortal Elegy.

The unattractive side of the picture is represented by the opposite extreme—a disused town burial-ground in a slum. There one's labours evoke unbounded curiosity (though that is by no means absent in the country) accompanied by irreverent criticism and chaff. But it is remarkable how soon the excitement dies down, and the denizens of the district resume their wonted occupations.

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Presuming the prospective worker to be satisfied that his labour is not wasted in transcribing monumental inscriptions, he may not unnaturally desire enlightenment as to the probable rate of progress at which his task may be pursued, with a view to calculating the amount of time he will be called upon to expend. Now this is one of the most difficult of questions to answer, quite apart from the worker's speed as a scribe, which alone may influence the matter very considerably. Good eyesight must be taken for granted. But although I have by me records of this sort of work, wherein the time spent over each spell is set down, it is next to impossible to work out an average, so varied are the factors to be considered. Consider merely the amount of lettering to be copied from a single monument, which may vary between the one extreme of the

bare initials and the year of death, and the other of a chiselled document charged with a multiplicity of names, dates, rhymes and quotations. Then take the question of legibility, for monumental inscriptions do not always rival the printed page. When threatened with oblivion, they frequently require much deciphering. However, assuming the series of gravestones to conform to the average, and to present no special difficulties, after a little practice the transcriber should be able to copy them line for line, and letter for letter (including verification, which should be done immediately), at the rate of about five minutes each. But many exceptions will occur, and in no case should extra time and trouble be grudged in the interests of accuracy and completeness. Abridgements or abstracts can of course be made at a much quicker rate than is required for transcripts.

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It is recommended that **Preliminary Arrangements.** the first step taken be that of requesting permission from the incumbent of the church, or the caretaker of the burial-ground. In the case of most grounds to which the general public have access, it is unlikely that any objection would be made to the copying of inscriptions, even if objection be legally sustainable, upon which point I have no information. In any case, however, a sense of confidence is engendered when one is armed with a letter of authority, calculated to silence the officiously inclined.

In many rural church-
A Warning: yards—although public feeling has put a stop to the former custom of grazing sheep therein—it is customary to cut the grass for fodder. On this account, it is necessary to avoid visiting such places when the grass is

becoming long, or resentment will be aroused by the treading down involved in a thorough search among the grass; and the difficulties of finding low and small memorials, too, will be increased at such times.

**The Choice of
a System.** Considerations of time, interest, and point of view will influence individual workers in regard to the plan adopted in dealing with different burial grounds. I append a list of methods, in the order of their relative degrees of importance.

(I.) By far the most satisfactory plan, and indeed the only one recognised by some authorities, is that of taking down every decipherable inscription, word for word and letter for letter. (For the purposes of a manuscript record it is just as easy to make the copies line for line also, but if it is intended to print them, and space is an object, a considerable economy is

undoubtedly effected by ignoring the division into lines, except in the case of rhymes.) A transcript of this sort—assuming it to be accurate—can never be superseded (as other systems may), and such a plan should always be adopted in small burial-grounds, or wherever the monuments are not too numerous for the time at disposal. The East Herts Archæological Society found that the making of verbatim transcripts takes twice the time that is occupied by noting only the essential particulars, and, in view of the amount of ground which this Society is endeavouring to cover, it has abandoned verbatim transcripts as absolutely impracticable in its own special case. But all inscriptions earlier than 1700 should be taken down letter for letter, because of their comparative rarity. On account of its erratic character, in modern eyes, it is less easy to lay down any rule as to punctuation,

where such a thing exists in the original. Many think it better to ignore the old, and to substitute one's own stops.

(II.) A variant plan, or a compromise, where the magnitude of the task deters the prospective worker from undertaking it in its entirety, is to undertake a definite part, such, for instance, as copying all inscriptions earlier than 1800. Another good date at which to terminate one's transcripts is 1837, when the civil registration of deaths commenced. Of course the later the date the better, especially in view of the fact that grave boards rarely last legible for fifty years. Another volunteer may perhaps be found to complete the work, though this will probably be found to be difficult.

Frequently it happens that in country districts additional burying space is provided by taking more land into the churchyard. In such cases, particularly where the border line of the new and the old is

well marked, the worker may permissibly elect to terminate his transcripts at such line. It does not necessarily follow, however, that all the modern inscriptions will be found on one side of the boundary, for almost invariably there are within the original area unfilled graves and private vaults, wherein burials continue to take place. And although the antiquary naturally experiences the greater interest in the older memorials, yet relatively modern inscriptions—*e.g.*, when they refer to nonagenarians — frequently contain information carrying us back quite a respectable way into the past. The importance of the less ancient memorials, indeed, may be illustrated indirectly by the declaration some few years ago of an eminent genealogist, to the effect that professional experience forced upon him the conclusion that parish-registers between 1750 and 1850 proved to be of most practical value. Hence

many late memorials, not appealing to the antiquary, represent indispensable links in somebody's pedigree.

(III.) The plan next best to verbatim transcripts is that of abridging inscriptions to the extent of leaving out formal phrases, scriptural quotations, etc., and so effecting a greater or less economy of time and space, without diminishing the records of facts.

(IV.) The briefest and quickest system of all, is that of merely calendaring or indexing the inscriptions, *i.e.*, ignoring everything beyond essential details, such as names in full, dates, ages, relationships, places with which connected, callings, professions, distinctions, etc. Such a list serves *most* purposes, and allows one to get over the ground with remarkable celerity.

(V.) Selections. This last, strictly speaking, is not a system at all, and can never be recognised as such. But it is the

plan generally favoured by the parish-historian, when it is necessary to observe some sense of proportion in what is generally a slender volume. In parish histories, therefore, we cannot look usually for more than selections, taking the shape of what is calculated to prove of most general interest. In such cases, however, it would be well if the compilers augmented the value of their respective books by adopting also No. 4, and included an index or calendar of all inscriptions, as in Harrod's "History of Mansfield," 1801—an early instance.

Method

Indispensable.

Before commencing to use one's note-book, or slips* it is well to make a brief preliminary survey of the topography of the burial-ground, with a view to adopting a

* Mr. Gerish points out that one of his reasons for preferring slips to note-books is that the former are easily arranged in alphabetical order before a fair copy is made, and certainly slips appear to be preferable should it be decided to arrange the transcripts in alphabetical order in the fair copy.

convenient plan of action, and to prevent any risk either of overlapping or omissions. It will be found generally that certain well-marked divisions exist, though it must be remembered that such divisions may not always remain unchanged, especially if represented by paths. Some elect to draw a rough plan of the ground, with a number, letter, or description attached to each division. This is a wise thing to do, though others deem it unnecessary.

However, the transcriber should make a beginning at some unmistakeable spot, such as on one side of the principal path, or at the churchyard gate, and the first entry in the note-book should record the circumstance. Further, as each section is completed, or any gateway or other prominent landmark reached, an entry should be made to that effect. It is also well, if possible, to terminate each spell of work at some landmark—if only a prominent

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tomb, or other memorial—so that there may be no risk of confusion when work is resumed. Care is particularly necessary when going over a large piece of ground not divided by paths, such as is sometimes met with. Such places also call for considerable vigilance that nothing shall be passed over inadvertently. If the foregoing precautions are observed, there should be no particular difficulty about finding a recorded memorial at any future date.

It is also of great assistance to remember that, with but few exceptions, burials are made in rows, so that, by working first up (to the left), then down (to the right) nothing need be omitted.

How to Transcribe.

Assuming the transcriber adopts the line for line system, very few examples of epitaphs will be found—not even on stones comprising two inscriptions side by side—that may not be taken down

on the ruled lines, by adopting a fine hand where necessary. When the lines of an inscription are unusually long, as is sometimes the case on the sides of tombs, the pages of the note-book temporarily must be utilised lengthwise.

One side of the paper only should be used (except where unavoidable), as this practice prevents "blurring," and conduces to the better preservation of the original copies, which is always desirable, for purposes of reference, not to mention the possibility of loss of the "fair" copy if not printed. Exceptions to this rule of using only one side of the paper are sometimes necessary, through the discovery that a memorial has been accidentally passed over, which it is desired to include in the proper order, but a cross-reference might sometimes serve the purpose. Again, a space may be left for one or more illegible inscriptions, to which it will be more con-

venient to attend at some future time. When these have been deciphered, it may be found that the space set apart is insufficient, and so the inscription has to be continued overleaf.

A line drawn quite across the page, preceded by a blank line, should always certify the limit between one memorial and the next. This rule should be observed particularly when an inscription is finished at the bottom of a page. Otherwise, confusion will be very apt to arise, as some epitaphs commence with the name of deceased, without prefatory words of any kind.

**Position
of the
Inscriptions.**

In the case of tombs, which generally display more than one inscription, a line not reaching to the sides of the page will suffice to separate the items, which should be separately headed, somewhat after the following styles:

“On the top-slab of a stone tomb” (mention if it be palisaded), “On one side of same tomb,” “On opposite side of same tomb,” “On one end of same tomb,” “On opposite end of same tomb,” “On one slope of pitched top of a tomb,” “On opposite slope.” All annotations should be placed in square brackets [], to avoid risk of confounding with text. To the foregoing sometimes has to be added, “On a brass, measuring — by — inches, affixed in top-slab of same tomb.” It is always well to measure brasses, which have a knack of disappearing. I have found as many as four brasses affixed on one tomb, sometimes to the partial destruction of the original inscription. And sometimes only the matrix of a brass is found, which also should be measured. Remember that head-stones are frequently inscribed on both sides, for instance, at Bishop’s Stortford there are many such.

**The Character
of the
Memorial.**

The character of the memorial wherefrom each inscription is taken must also be recorded, in some such manner as "H" indicating headstone, and "R" for recumbent stone, etc. There is not usually any risk of mistake about tombs, both on account of their comparative fewness (some grounds present marked exceptions to this rule) and on account of the various incidental particulars supplied by the transcriber, as referred to in the foregoing paragraph. In grounds (or parts of grounds) where one type of memorial predominates, it may serve equally well to indicate only the exceptions. For instance, where interments have been long discontinued, it is sometimes found convenient by the authorities to lay all the headstones down on their backs, except, say, some few with their backs to the wall. In such cases it might well be intimated that

all stones must be understood to be now recumbent, unless otherwise stated. Such a thing as an early headstone broken in two, but carefully repaired again with clamps of iron, is worthy of note. It is also well, if stones be broken, to notify as much, especially if the circumstance interferes with the making of a full transcript.

Fashions in memorials
Its Material. are displayed by many burial-grounds, in designs, in types, and in materials. Though marble, stone and slate memorials are nowadays the rule, many graveyards still exhibit numbers of comparatively ephemeral ones. Iron and wood memorials are not uncommon, while others of earthenware may be noted in some places. All these, of course, should be described accordingly. But with globes covering painted inscriptions on porcelain, or funeral cards, the transcriber steadfastly must decline to intermeddle.

Mediæval churchyard

Early Stones. memorials are by no means unknown, though rare, and unlikely to prove of service to the genealogist. Inscribed tombs and stones such as we are familiar with seem to have been introduced during the Commonwealth, the oldest I have seen around Nottingham being a small headstone at Wilford, dated 1659, and a tomb at Greasley, belonging to the following decade. In the great majority of local churchyards I have found not a single 17th century memorial. Occasionally, what appear to be 17th century churchyard recumbent memorials, on investigation, prove to have been at some period or other removed from inside the church.

Very likely many 17th century stones have perished, or have been destroyed, to make room for newer ones, particularly in towns, where the grounds are apt to become

overcrowded. Nevertheless, in view of their very general absence, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion than that churchyard memorials did not begin to come into anything like favour until 1700, or later.

**Nonconformist
Burial-
grounds.** Moreover, the various Nonconformist bodies appear to have been still more backward, or reluctant, in the practice of rearing sepulchral monuments in the burial-grounds attached to their respective places of worship. The old Baptist burial-ground of Nottingham, which in a deed of 1724 is described as "now and for many years last past used as a burying place for the people commonly called Baptists, alias Anabaptists, in and about the said town of Nottingham," contains no stone earlier than 1757. The presumably still older ground of the Nottingham Independents, the oldest dis-

senting body in Nottingham, contains no stone older than 1741. Incidentally it may be mentioned that, hitherto, Nonconformist sepulchral monuments have suffered, if anything, worse neglect than those in churchyards. Generally speaking, Nonconformist inscriptions are inclined to be a shade more prosaic than those in churchyards, and less prone to lapse into rhyme, but their genealogical importance is not to be gainsaid. It is pleasant to observe that this is coming to be more widely recognised. A lengthy correspondence on Nonconformist Burial-grounds is to be found in "Notes and Queries" for the present year.

Quaker Burial-grounds.* In his interesting article on the Quaker records† Mr. Josiah Newman did not touch on the subject of Friends' grave-stones. The reason is not far to seek. Excellent recorders as Quakers have been

* From information kindly furnished by Mr. Norman Penney.

† See "Some Special Studies in Genealogy," chapter ii.

in every other way, their burial-grounds contain few, if any, inscriptions of genealogical interest. Nor are these graven records much missed by the student of Quaker genealogies, as the registers at their disposal contain so much more information than the parish church register of burials.

A few extracts from the Minutes of Advice of the Yearly Meeting of Friends may not be out of place here :

1717. "This meeting being informed that Friends in some places have gone into the vain custom of erecting monuments over the dead bodies of Friends, by stones, inscriptions, etc., it is therefore the advice of this meeting, that all such monuments should be removed, as much as may be with discretion and conveniency ; and that none be anywhere made or set up, near, or over, the dead bodies of friends or others, in Friends' burying-places for time to come."

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1766. "This meeting being informed, that since the advice formerly issued, in order to excite Friends to a proper regard to our testimony against grave-stones, divers have accordingly been removed; and being desirous that the revival of this concern may be effectual, we earnestly recommend the removal of these may become general."

1850. "This meeting has entered into a serious and deliberate consideration of the minutes of 1717 and 1766, under the head "Grave-stones, etc.," in the Rules of Discipline, and it is renewedly of the judgment that our religious society has a sound Christian testimony to bear against the erection of monuments, as well as against all inscriptions of an eulogistic character over the graves of their deceased friends. Nevertheless, this meeting is of the opinion, that to place over the grave a plain flat stone, laid horizontally, the inscription on which is confined to a simple record of the

name and age of the individual interred underneath, together with the date of the decease, is no violation of such testimony; the object in this instance being simply that of defining the position of the grave, with a view to the satisfaction of surviving relatives, and the prevention of the premature (*sic*) reopening.

Monthly meetings are therefore left at liberty to adopt the use of such stones in any of the burial-grounds under their care, it being distinctly understood that, in all cases, they are to be provided and put down under the direction of the Monthly Meeting, and not by private individuals, so that, in each particular burial-ground, such an entire uniformity may be preserved in respect to the materials, size and form of the stones, as well as in the mode of placing them, as may effectually guard against any distinction being made in that place where the rich and poor meet together."

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Before the issue of the last Minute, a letter appeared in "The Friend" (1850, p. 94), dealing with this vexed question.

To this rule of simplicity there are a few isolated exceptions to be found in Quaker burial-grounds, and consequently these are specially noteworthy. For instance, Sir Nathaniel Meade early in the eighteenth century refused to comply with the Advice, and caused to be erected at Barking, in Essex, over the body of his father, William Meade (the step-son-in-law of George Fox), an elaborate monument with a lengthy inscription. Sir Nathaniel's connection with the society was severed later, so this is not a good example of the strictly obedient Quaker.

In the "Antiquary" for July, 1899, will be found the third part ("Burial Grounds") of an illustrated article, entitled "Haunts of the London Quakers," by Mrs. Basil

Holmes. From this the following paragraph is culled as more typical of the old-time Quaker's feelings on this subject :

“ . . . in the Chequer Alley ground . . . a small tablet, with the date and the initials G. F. upon it, was let into the wall near the spot where George Fox was buried. But country Friends used to flock in such numbers to his grave, and would so fondly gaze on this simple stone, that an over-zealous Quaker, named Robert Howard, pronounced it ‘Nehushtan,’ and had it knocked to pieces.”

Those who are interested in this special branch of the subject may be glad to know that “Quakeriana” for July, 1895, contains references to forgotten Quaker burial-grounds at Boldon, South Shields, North Shields (high-end), Cullercoats, Hullavington (between Chippenham and Malmesbury), and Lower Stanton (near Chippen-

ham); at which last there is an iron tablet in one of the boundary walls, inscribed with "Friends' Burial Ground, 1658."

Occasionally, in old
Rarities. churchyards, one meets with unique, or at least very rare types of memorials, such as one quaint inscribed stone at the head of a grave, and another at the foot (as at Nut-hall), or a curiously-moulded oval stone, after the style of a mirror (as at Greasley). Such are worthy of special note, as also are figures of hands, on back or front of the stone, and other emblems, masonic or otherwise. Elaborately or unusually carved stones should be so mentioned, as, indeed, should any out-of-the-way features. For these and other things, a camera could be requisitioned advantageously, where convenient. It is also said that partly illegible inscriptions sometimes stand out better in photographs.

**Notorious
Epitaphs.**

It may be said that every churchyard contains something noteworthy, in its monuments or their inscriptions. If it chance to contain a notorious and oft-printed epitaph, it should be by no means omitted for that reason. One may generally avoid conventionality by giving an accurate rendering, for the "scissors-and-paste" fraternity never consults originals.

**Inscriptions to
Celebrities.**

The interest of a series of transcripts can, of course, be increased by annotating the inscriptions to famous people. It may even chance that the transcriber may be lucky enough to discover the forgotten burial-place of a great man, though such a thing can only happen on rare occasions—say, in the cases of individuals whose worth has been discovered by later generations.

**Tombstones
as Evidence of
Family's
Status.**

Observant transcribers will note many things, one of which is that the erection of memorials is not always to be taken as an evidence of status. Some families were indifferent, while in others it seems to have amounted almost to a mania. Sometimes quite a considerable series will be found in a group, which may represent one or several generations of the same family.

**Erratic
Spelling.**

Different ways of spelling the same surname will frequently be noted ; but, needless to say, the transcriber should never assume the responsibility of reducing to common form, or of assuming identity of family, even if the contiguity of the memorials renders this morally certain. Indeed, both orthography and capital letters should be faithfully rendered as in the original, however eccentric the former and

profuse the latter. But in the by no means uncommon event of finding the most ordinary words mis-spelt, such as "there" for "their," "to" for "too," "where" for "were," as also when words are found repeated needlessly, it is well to attach a note, such as will preclude the liability of their being ranked as clerical errors of the transcriber. Some churchyards, in rural districts, present shocking examples of bad spelling, which is apt to reflect local dialect and pronunciation. The transcriber generally welcomes these curiosities, as he does anything out of the common, as breaks in what is frequently a monotonous labour.

**Some other
Variations.**

Not less welcome are variations from the orthodox in other directions, as "departed her life" for "departed this life," and "who left this sublunary world" or "whose vital spark was extinguished," instead of either. Many such variations

are encountered in different districts. Sometimes (as at Edwinstone) all the particulars of the inscription—name, age, date, etc.—are put into rhyme. Some memorials refer to a person's trade, or they localise place of residence, by naming hamlet, farm, or even street. Some inform us that the deceased belonged to quite a different part of the country, and they may even explain his burial so far from home by telling us that which, no doubt, applied to many of the rest, to wit, that he died while on a visit, or while on a journey yet further afield. Conversely, tombstones incidentally may refer to persons buried elsewhere in England or in distant parts of the earth.

A list of deceased children on a stone in St. Mary's Churchyard, Nottingham, includes the name of a still-born child !

In the case of variant surnames on the same stone, although no relationship between the parties be mentioned, such may be inferred all but invariably.

A field of speculation is presented for the curious by blanks on one side or the other of stones projected for the mutual commemoration of husband and wife, and placed in position when the first of them died. Removal from the neighbourhood, etc., may account for some of the blanks never becoming filled; but, alas for poor human nature, fresh alliances account for others!

A suggestion was lately made to the effect that transcribers should carefully note whether an inscription begins with "Here lies," or with any other formula, such as "In memory of," on the ground that, while the former testifies to interment on the spot, other headings may, perhaps, refer to persons buried elsewhere. Such a remark is distinctly misleading, as a glance over the inscriptions in any burial ground will show, for not one in twenty of them begins with "Here lies," which formula

is much more significant as an indication of period, for it is not often found after 1800.

**On Making
a Fair Copy.**

Whatever system be adopted, the scribe should never neglect to make a "fair" pen-and-ink copy of his pencilled records without delay, for, however painstakingly one may jot down every particular that seems to call for annotation, there are always details, if only such as occur in the form of afterthoughts, for which recourse must be had to memory—the fresher the better. Actual experience is essential to the proper understanding of this remark. Both for this reason, and to combat monotony in either direction, the best plan is to carry on the original transcribing and the re-copying contemporaneously; *i.e.*, the morning may be devoted to churchyard work and the afternoon to re-copying, or advantage may be taken of wet weather to keep abreast of the first transcript. The second transcript,

of course, like the first, requires to be afterwards verified word for word.

**On Annotating
the Transcript.**

My genealogical readers do not need to be told of the numerous and (to them) obvious methods by which they can render their collections more complete. Many references (*e.g.*, to the County Histories, abstracts from the will of the deceased whose memory is commemorated by the inscription, etc.) will occur to every genealogical mind. I may, however, add here one or two notes of methods which are especially suitable in this class of work. Where memorials have disappeared in connection with alterations, etc., an interview with the sexton, or with some elderly inhabitant, will sometimes supply testimony well worth putting on record. Again, the epitaphs mentioned in printed accounts of the church and churchyard, and in topographical works, should be checked. Yet, again, if there be extant any

old views of the church, they will probably show also some of the monuments in the churchyard, and though such pictorial evidence is not to be relied upon invariably, it is well to take the slight pains of comparing it with the present state of affairs.

Final Arrangement. As to the question of arrangement of the completed transcripts, though there is something to be said for the chronological, the arrangement of most practical value seems to be leaving them just as taken down, together with the various landmark references, so that any future searcher after the originals may, so to speak, tread in the transcriber's footsteps. To be of any value for reference, an index of surnames must be compiled, which should include a list of references to stones whereon the surnames were found to be wholly or partly illegible. If the first part of a name can be read, it should, of course,

also figure in its alphabetical order (as nearly as may be) in the index. Personally, I also make a practice of including, duly bracketed, surnames found used as christian names, on account of the relationship that is to be inferred. There should also be an introduction and a title-page, with the transcriber's name, and the date when the transcripts were made.

**What to do
with the
Completed
Transcript.**

Finally, there is the question of what to do with the completed MS. of the transcripts? To this it may safely be answered that the best plan of all is to assure their permanence by printing them. Such, however, as cannot afford to incur the risk of monetary loss, would do well to bind and present them to a suitable public library, such as that of the county town; or, as one authority suggests, to that of the county antiquarian society. It would also be

advisable to communicate with Mr. Ralph Nevill, F.S.A., of Castle Hill, Guildford, the Honorary Secretary of the new Association for Recording Churchyard Inscriptions. But, despite all that may be advised to the contrary, there will, doubtless, be those who prefer to retain the manuscripts in their own hands; and, of course, none can dispute their right to do so. After all, the principal and the urgent matter is that the work of transcription be undertaken, and that, wherever preserved, reasonable access be allowed to interested parties. It would however be a welcome act of grace, on the part of private compilers or owners of transcripts, to apprise the secretary of the county antiquarian society of their existence, as well for purposes of reference as to prevent work being unnecessarily duplicated.

The local press will, in the majority of cases, print interestingly-written descriptions

of churchyards in the district. It is as well to give the area, enlargement date, how burials are distributed (the earliest nearly always on the south), peculiarities, list of surnames and the most interesting of the epitaphs. I am told that these accounts increase the sale of the paper very largely in the parish of which the account is given.

II.

HINTS ON READING APPARENTLY
ILLEGIBLE INSCRIPTIONS.**Cause of
Illegibility.**

Graveyard inscriptions, sometimes comparatively modern, may be "illegible" from any one of many causes, beyond that of time and decay, in which every recurrent winter plays its destructive part. Sometimes recumbent stones become gradually encroached upon by the surrounding turf until only a little of the centre of the slab remains visible. It may be covered entirely, so that its position can only be discerned faintly, or felt. But the latter eventuality is rare. Where the stone is partially turf-

covered, the scribe will do well to tear back the covering sufficiently to rescue name, date and as much of the remainder as may happen to be laid bare in the process.

**Eclipsed
Inscriptions.**

Occasionally two tombs will be found built so closely alongside each other that the top slabs touch, or nearly so. In such cases, where the opposing *sides* are inscribed, the utmost pains in peering over top and around ends will not always enable one to copy what is there, particularly if in the intervening space rubbish has accumulated. One can only set down so much as can be read, after having used a stick to clear the way as far as possible. A portable electric torch frequently can be made of use in such cases.

Again, the face of an old headstone is sometimes found to be wholly or partially screened by a later memorial built in front of it, in utter disregard of the consequent

eclipse. One generally has to be content with copying such words and letters as remain visible, if any.

**Sunken
Stones.**

The case is much the same in the frequent instances where old stones have more or less sunk. Of course, what remains above ground must be noted, and it is well to make some effort—say, with the aid of a pocket-knife or stick—to loosen the turf sufficiently to read name, date, or both, if feasible. The more thorough way of dealing with this difficulty is to take a small mason's trowel, cut away the turf and dig out sufficient earth to enable the inscription to be read, but if this method be adopted care must be taken to replace earth and turf. Where old graveyards are cultivated, so that the soil is loose, at least one additional line of lettering can be bared by drawing a stick along the point of contact. At the foot of one's transcript of

such incomplete inscription, should be written in square brackets some such note as "[Remainder buried]." If it be uncertain whether the last line copied is or is not the final one, the additional words "if any" may be inserted between those above named. The oldest stones more frequently refer to a single individual.

**Moss-grown
Stones.**

Recumbent stones and altar-tombs, when situated under trees, are peculiarly apt to become moss-grown. If the growth be in its early stage—merely in the hollows of the letters—it may not seriously affect the legibility of the inscription. But if the growth be continuous it will have to be removed, for which process the point of a stick will be found sufficiently efficacious. It is here that Mr. Gerish uses his plane-blade, the bevelled edge of which removes moss and dirt without injuring the stone, the blunt pen-knife serving to clean out the

letters. The inscription is often found to be partially perished under the covering, through disintegration of the particles of stone. It should be quite cleared of all litter, by means of twigs or tufts of grass; and, though it may be a slow task, the words and figures probably will be wholly or partially deciphered, if patience be exercised.

**Ivy-grown
Stones.**

Old stones not infrequently acquire a picturesque but obstructive draping of ivy. Some recent hints in leaflet form framed for the guidance of churchyard scribes, suggested that in such cases reference might be made to, say, "an ivy-covered tomb, probably eighteenth century," but such a surrender is surely too tame. After being once loosened—no difficult matter—a coating of ivy will lift off like a mat, and can be as easily replaced. I recently so detached and replaced the ivy

on an old tomb-top, whereon no single letter previously was visible, thus discovering and transcribing an uncommonly interesting inscription two centuries old.

Sometimes, where the ground is liable to invasion by boys, it may be necessary to remove an inch or so of dust from recumbent stones.

Smoke- begrimed Stones in Town Churchyards.	Recumbent stones in centrally-situated town graveyards generally acquire a tenacious deposit of mud, from the smoke-laden atmosphere, which, worse still, seems to be charged with chemical properties highly inimical to the long duration of the inscription, whether on an ordinary stone or on the top of a tomb. Lightly-cut inscriptions sometimes are found to have vanished utterly. In the absence of Mr. Gerish's plane-blade and brush, it is an unpleasant, but sometimes unavoidable, task
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with twig-stems or pieces of stick to scrape away the mud sufficiently to rescue vital details at least. In thoroughly dry weather the task becomes slightly less unpleasant, but much harder rubbing is required. In such cases it seems scarcely worth the labour to make any endeavour to record such dispensable details as punctuation; or to ascertain whether the usual small letter or letters follow the shortened name of a month; or to trouble whether the ordinal signs "st.," "nd.," "rd.," or "th.," follow the day of the month. And if there are rhymes, or scripture quotations. which generally occur at the foot of the inscription, it may be deemed excusable in such cases if a few words be deciphered, wherefrom the rhymes or quotations may be recognised, for in nine cases out of ten the former run in well-worn grooves subject to immaterial variations.

An effective practice, which however will scarcely be adopted generally, except in dealing with specially important recumbent stones, or where great thoroughness is aimed at, is to have the surface scrubbed with a hard brush and afterwards flushed with clean water. This plan lays bare all that actually exists of incised work, and finally settles the question whether an inscription be decipherable or not. One noteworthy circumstance is that such letters as remain are usually much more easily read when the stone is partially rather than thoroughly flushed. That is to say, if the soiled surface moisture be suffered to remain for a short time, it settles in the incised letters in a manner that throws them into surprising prominence.

One source of trouble, and frequently of error to inexperienced persons, is the various peculiar types of lettering occasionally met with on monuments of various

dates. Only care and experience will satisfactorily overcome such difficulties.

**How to
Decipher
Figures.**

A word or two may be devoted to the matter of the deciphering of partially illegible figures on recumbent stones (few of these difficulties occur with headstones yet upright, many having been laid down at some subsequent period). Dates are vital—particularly the years—and no pains should be spared in deciphering them. The figures most likely to be confounded are the 3 and the 5, which it is sometimes impossible to distinguish. It is also hard to differentiate in cases of a badly-worn 0, 6, or 9, for the tail or stem of the two latter is found often to be erased, and then the only thing to do is to endeavour to ascertain if there be any sign of convergence of one side of the apparent ellipse, at top or bottom, such as would distinguish 6 or 9 from 0. Sometimes

a 7 may be deciphered from the circumstance that its stem is frequently brought down diagonally below the general level of the rest of the figures, a remark that applies also to the cross upright of the 4. Much, however, depends on the style or type of the figures used. Where they are of equal height, it often happens that the last-named figure only survives in the form of its deeply-cut upright stroke, which is only to be distinguished from 1 by the circumstance that an equally deeply-cut triangular terminal to the horizontal stroke often survives also on the middle of the right side of the upright. It may, indeed, be reduced to a mere dot or point, but should always be sought for. The figure 8 often remains only in the insignificant form of the deeply-cut central diagonal wave, or double curve, which however sufficiently serves its purpose, for the reason that it cannot be confounded with anything else.

Here, indeed, some considerable experience of the difficulties associated with partially illegible inscriptions moves me to crave a meed of indulgence for workers in this field, as the most rigidly conscientious are apt occasionally to be misled by the sculptor's vagaries, when accentuated by lapse of time.

**Use of
Inference.**

Sometimes, when legible dates occur above and below an illegible year, the latter may be supplied wholly or approximately by inference, or at least certain otherwise competitive figures may be eliminated, assuming the particulars of an inscription to be chronologically arranged, which applies to nineteen out of twenty cases. Again, where a partially illegible inscription to man and wife occurs, the reflection that in the vast majority of cases the respective ages of couples vary only to the extent of very few years, frequently enables one to check inferentially dates by ages, and ages by dates.

Of course, inference also plays a legitimate part in other directions. Where partially illegible or broken stones reveal only a minor portion of such formal lines as "Here lieth the body of," "In affectionate remembrance of," or "Who departed this life," one does not need to deplore what is lost. Again, a surname that is very doubtful on one part of a stone, if repeated once or more elsewhere, becomes a certainty. Similarly, when an inscription first remembers a child of stated parents, and afterwards proceeds, "also the above-named," etc., one has a good idea what should follow, whether fully visible or not. Again, say a decayed headstone reveals only part of a surname, such as "——borough," while a neighbouring stone or stones record members of the "Attenborough" family, the deduction is obvious, but always with due qualification, and should be noted, thus "[Atten]borough."

**Perseverance
Necessary.**

A good general rule is not to be influenced by first impressions as to the illegibility of monumental inscriptions. Many a stone revealing little or nothing beyond a plain surface to a superficial glance, has been persuaded wholly or partially to yield up its secrets to the painstaking chronicler, and the rescue of a single name or date is something accomplished. Even a little rubbing of the surface with a tuft of grass sometimes produces surprising results. But after the worker has done his best, he will find himself occasionally unable to decipher the remnants of incised lettering, whether decayed or worn by foot-traffic. Old headstones, though rarely, are sometimes found to have long ceased to serve their original purpose, having lost all traces of lettering. Our ancestors were by no means so frequently imposed upon by the mason in respect of non-suitable stone, as is the case

nowadays. The worker should not arrive too hastily at a pessimistic conclusion. He should view the memorial both closely, at a respectable distance, and diagonally, from either side, taking down in their respective positions the words that gradually dawn upon him, and making use of his imagination while striving to evolve the missing portions, leaving also space in his note-book equal to the full number of lines, if they can be counted. It is also well to scrutinise such inscriptions while both wet and dry, and under all conditions of light and sunshine. In other words, inscriptions that threaten to baffle the transcriber should be at least glanced at on each occasion of visiting the churchyard—that is, if they are deemed worthy of the trouble. Some half-dozen examinations will generally result either in a solution of the puzzle, or in the conviction that it is insoluble.

Churchyard

These last remarks, of course, refer to indistinct rather than to erased lettering, for many vanished or partially vanished inscriptions present little or nothing beyond a smooth surface, where lettering once existed, and which must be represented in the transcripts by dotted lines, dashes, or (where the number of missing letters or figures is known) by asterisks. Sometimes, in the cases of unsuitable materials, stones will be found "flaking," or "shelling," insomuch that the inscription, or part of it, exists on little more than a bubble, such as a touch of the finger would shiver. In these, and other cases, the worker will enjoy the satisfaction of rescuing what will be simply non-existent even one year later.

Finally, although the imagination has been mentioned as a suggested assistant to the eye, it must be strictly understood that this refers only to its legitimate use—say,

**Accuracy of
Prime
Importance.**

in the case of one having experience of many churchyards, and consequently, in all probability, of parallel inscriptions—which may thus result in sense being made of what might otherwise appear nonsense. Under no circumstances must the transcriber mislead himself and others by recording without qualification any single word, letter, or figure in the slightest degree uncertain. On the other hand, in many instances it would be a pity not to set down the result of one's conscientious observation and judgment where such seemed called for, as when one is morally certain as to a sentence, a name, or a date, which yet cannot be considered readable. In all such instances the inferred or supposed passages should be placed in square brackets, or printed in italics, and an explanatory note attached. Some elect to place a mark of interrogation in connection

with uncertain readings, but it is difficult to see what good purpose is served thereby.

Unquestionably, many of the difficulties here touched upon, such as involve the expenditure of time and study, might be dissipated very readily where free recourse can be had to the parish register, just as many parish registers could be corrected and augmented by collation with the bishop's transcripts. But it is only in a small minority of cases that such privilege is likely to be obtained, so that it is well to learn to make the most of one's unsupported efforts. Needless to say, where collation with the burial register is feasible, the most finished results of all are possible.

But the question of how
How far to go. far to go in such matters,
or, in other words, with
precisely what degree of thoroughness a
burial-ground should be taken in hand, is
a matter on which no hard and fast rules

can be laid down. If laid down they would not be observed, and if insisted upon, one of the effects would be to discourage possible volunteers. To put it in another way, one who has no particular interest in one churchyard more than another, say, such as a private member of a county antiquarian society, who volunteers to take his share in the labour of transcribing the inscriptions in his shire, cannot be reasonably expected to undertake the toilsome or dirty tasks sometimes involved where thoroughness is aimed at, and he may not be in a position to pay for assistance. On the other hand, in a case such as a clergyman overhauling his own churchyard, or a resident in the parish or other person imbued with special interest, and possibly having special facilities also, it seems a pity to allow the result to be other than absolutely exhaustive. It is difficult to conceive, for instance, a manner

in which better returns can be acquired for a tip of half-a-crown to the sexton, than in the temporary disinterment of a few ancient sunken or "eclipsed" stones, and the placing on permanent record of their short, simple, and long-forgotten chronicles. Buried stones usually are found to be well preserved. The sense of satisfaction consequent on conscientious and fully completed work of this sort is a reward worth striving for.

III.

TYPICAL AND AUTHENTIC
EXAMPLES.

This section, which it is hoped will not prove the least interesting, is reserved for a characteristic series, not of the most extraordinary examples to be found, but of samples of what the everyday transcriber may expect to find in the average churchyard. Such may not be the usual plan adopted in printing epitaphs, but it is believed it will best serve the purpose of those for whom this book is written. With only one or two exceptions, they are extracted from the writer's own collections. In cases where "etc." occurs, portions of the rhymes are omitted as being irrelevant,

**Genealogical
Epitaphs.**

It is but fitting that notice should be taken first of epitaphs presenting special "genealogical" features, either in prose or rhyme, beyond what one is ordinarily justified in expecting to find. The most common intimation takes the form of a postscript at the foot of an inscription, to the effect that the stone is intended to commemorate also a stated number of children "who died in infancy." Less often the respective numbers of sons and daughters are specified, and very occasionally their names are added. In any case, the genealogist has reason to be thankful for the crumbs of authentic information afforded.

At Byfleet, co. Surrey, the gravestone of Elizabeth Ayres, died 29 March, 1769, aged 89, records :

"She was Mother, Grandmother &
Greatgrandmother of 125 Children."

**Tantalising
Memorials.**

The reverse side of the picture is represented by those happily rare instances of memorials innocent of any date whatever. For instance, at Greasley, Notts., stands a massive headstone, containing only the following terse words: "Here lieth the Bodies of Ann Toul and her three Children Ann & 2 Jonothans." This, however, is outdone by a painted inscription I copied upwards of twenty years ago from a wooden cross in the churchyard of Sneinton, Notts. : "In memory of three children their names are they not written in the Lamb's Book of Life." One can fancy the sentiments of the genealogist confronted by an inscription like that !

Nor is it pleasant, except as a rarity, to encounter so indolently-compiled a memorial as that in St. Peter's Churchyard, Nottingham, indicating the resting place of Thomas Budge, who died in 1775, "also the body of Ann, his Wife, who died some time since,"

At Middleham, in Yorkshire, a gravestone is to be seen bearing only the two words—"Farewell, Pickering."

In Greasley churchyard evidence unexpected, because unusual, of rustic regard for forefathers, occurs on a Renshaw family memorial, 1876: "Also near this place lieth inter'd an ancient ancestry in the hope of a joyful resurection to life eternal."

**Precise Date
of Birth
Stated.**

Stones that supply date of birth, instead of merely the number of years at death, though exceptional, naturally have a special value, particularly when it be remembered that there is often great uncertainty, and consequently error, as to the ages of elderly people. What amounts to the same thing is the bid for originality, not infrequently met with on gravestones, of stating the age of deceased in years, and adding the numbers of additional months, weeks, and days. Such

inscriptions are of much greater frequency on the Continent than here.

Age Given in Rhymes. Exceptional also, though by no means rare, is the practice of mentioning the age of deceased in the accompanying rhymes—occasionally instead of, but generally in addition to supplying that information in its proper place. A few examples are appended, the first being one of the most notorious among Nottinghamshire epitaphs :

On Rebecca Freeland, at Edwalton,
1741 :

“She drank good Ale, good Punch, and Wine,
And liv’d to th’ Age of ninety-nine.”

On Charles Maltby, at Greasley, 1821 :
“With successful industry he passed through life,
Attach’d to his children, his friends, and his
wife ;
And reached the advanced age of ninety you see,
Having lived an example of Oeconomy.”

Churchyard

On William Hickling, 1808, at Barker Gate, Nottingham :

“ The Lord this Youth call'd of this Stage,
When he was full twelve years of Age,” (etc.)

On Joseph Hackett, 1870, at Bulwell :

“ I numbered over 14 years when early called
away,
Vain were my talents of this world they could
not make me stay.”

**Duration of
Wedded Life
Stated.**

Unusual, but not the less acceptable when we find them, are gravestones which, by referring to the duration of wedded life, supply the approximate date of marriage. A Mitchell stone, at Bulwell, 1813, for instance, records that “they lived together in Wedlock sixty-six Years and came to their grave in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in his season.” On an earlier headstone, to the

Banner family, 1784, at Greasley, we find a parallel statement in rhyme :

“Near Sixty Years we lived Man and Wife,
in Various Changes of a Worldly Life :” (etc.)

Still more noteworthy (despite the fearful travesty of metre) is a memorial at Sutton-in-Ashfield, Notts., dated 1813, as it refers also to offspring :

“Three years and six months I enjoyed a
married life,
I left a wife and two children whom I
loved as dear as my life ;” (etc.)

**Number of
Children
Stated.**

Rhyming allusions to the number of children are found elsewhere, but unfortunately not with any frequency. In Radford churchyard, Nottingham, a stone dated 1801 informs the reader that :

“This loving Husband that lies here,
Was Father of Ten Children dear ;” (etc.)

Churchyard

Indication of Change of Residence.

Perhaps more noteworthy is a Hammond stone in St. Mary's Churchyard, Nottingham, 1751, to the wife of the contemporary master of the Grammar School, which includes a clue to the earlier period of their lives :

“ Four babes of theirs lie also near,
And two at Dean in Northamptonshire.”

At St. Brelade's, Jersey, there is an inscription to Susanna Baker, died 9 March, 1845, aged 76, which describes her as a native of Edinburgh, but a resident of Jersey for 53 years.

References to Surviving Relatives.

Sometimes the rhymes make passing allusions to surviving brothers and sisters. A headstone to Caroline Martin, 1801, aged 14, in the Castle Gate dissenting burial-ground, Nottingham, as well as referring to parting

from "my Dearest Friend," speaks of "My Sisters, too, I leave behind." The gravestone of Elizabeth Wright, aged 18, who died in 1750, at Burton Joyce, refers to departed ones :

"Me & my Seven Brothers here do lie,
In hopes we're happy to Eternity."

**Length of
Service.**

References on the grave-stones of servants to their years of service, are perhaps too common for special indication. An ordinary example at Castle Gate, Nottingham, 1808, remembers George Buxton, "who lived about 40 years in the Service of the late Ichabod Wright, Esqr. and of his Descendants." (The latter was grandfather of the translator of Dante.) Seldom, however, do we find an item of this sort so painfully dragged into doggerel rhyme as on a Gilborn headstone at Greasley, 1855 :

“ A faithful Parent slumbers here,
 A father, and a Friend sincere ;
 With energy and courage fervent,
 Was 60 Years a faithful & Trusty servant.”

**Mention of
 Illness.**

Periods of time also occasionally are recorded in connection with other matters, such as illness, Mrs. Hammond aforementioned, 1751, having died “after 8 years’ patient illness.” Like other things, it is not a stranger to rhyme. The hackneyed lines (which have several slight variations) designed for such as died of lingering troubles :

“ Afflictions sore long time he bore,
 Physicians were in vain ;
 Till God above in tender love,
 Did ease him of his pain.”

having been placed over Charles Pacey, at Barker Gate, Nottingham, 1794, appear to have been deemed, on second thoughts, insufficiently explicit, for the third and fourth

words, "long time," were cut out of the slate, and a small oblong substituted, inscribed with the words "three years" !

At Sunbury, in Middlesex, the following inscription, now almost illegible, is to be found :

"In Memory of Mr. Edward Layton who departed this life October the 14th 1761, aged 73. He had four Stones taken from him at 70 years of age and survived almost three years."

It may not be irrelevant here to mention that, with one exception, the fatal disease is but rarely named on old gravestones, although I have some recollection of local rhymes to one dying of fits, and the Barker Gate memorial to James Smith, 1809, records that he "died of a malignant Fever." The exception alluded to above, is, of course, the widely-distributed and familiar :

Churchyard

“ A pale consumption gave the fatal blow,
The stroke was certain, though the effects were
slow,” (etc.)

But if diseases are but
Sudden Death. seldom alluded to, compensation, so to speak, is afforded by the frequent records of sudden or tragic death. For this, as for other special cases, stereotyped lines existed, which (subject, as usual, to immaterial variations) became duplicated in countless churchyards, as follows :

“ Oh ! sudden change, I in a moment fell,
And had not time to bid my friends farewell ;”
(etc.)

On a stone in Basford Churchyard, 1853,
occurs :

“ O death I little thought of thee,
When I set out from home ;
But thy commission was for me,
And what a sudden doom.”

The headstone to William Paulson, 1842, in Bulwell Churchyard, records that :

“ A dreadful accident brought on his end,
That made him much lamented as a friend ”
(etc.)

The same churchyard contains these rhymes to “ George Carrott, who was accidentally killed at Hucknall Pit, Novr. the 20th 1875, in the 14th year of his age ” :

“ His life hung by a slender thread,
It was no sooner cut then he was dead ;
Death unto him the blow did send,
The fatal accident brought on his end.”

The same burial-ground contains more or less appropriate rhymes to “ William Haslam, who was so injured by a fall from a steam engine while playing with a youth on the Benerley and Bulwell new line, on March 3rd 1877 that he died on the 4th aged 20 years ; ” to “ John Davis, who was accidentally killed at Cinder Hill Colliery,

Churchyard

Nov. 2nd, 1888, aged 17 years"; and to "James Leatherland, who was accidentally killed by a butcher's knife, March 26th, 1886, aged 21 years"; thus showing that noteworthy inscriptions are not necessarily confined to early memorials. One further example, in Greasley churchyard, occurs on a headstone to George Lee, 1819:

"Take warning by my fate Ye Miners all!
And be prepar'd for Death's tremendous call;
Though now in perfect health and youthful
bloom;
You may be brought to an untimely Tomb!
By damp, foul air, or fatal fall, like me,
Receive the summons to Eternity!!!"

Inscriptions Written by Mourning Lovers.

Memorials inscribed by mourning lovers are relatively rare, no doubt because stones commonly are reared by parents of the deceased when unmarried, and, naturally, they plan epitaphs from their own standpoint. At

Barker Gate, Nottingham, however, on a stone to Joseph Beeston, 1795, aged 25, occurs :

“ And may the Maid who dedicates this Stone,
Who lov'd him living and laments him gone,
Triumphant meet him in the Realms above,
To sing the Wonders of Redeeming Love.”

**Deaths of
those Recently
Married.**

Less rare are sad tributes
to newly-wedded partners,
such as the following over
Thomas Wright, 1811,
aged 25, at Edwalton :

“ The nuptial bed I scarce had trod,
Ere summoned forth to meet my God,
Compell'd to leave my weeping bride,
Sunk from her tender arms and dy'd.

At Barker Gate, too, are some pathetic lines over Rebecca, wife of James Brightmore, 1810, aged 25, beginning :

“ Oh ! cruel death thy bow why didst thou bend,
Thy well directed shaft has kill'd my Friend.”

Churchyard

Less unique are lines in St. Mary's churchyard over a certain William ——— (surname illegible), who died in 1770, aged 22, commencing:

“ O Angry Death that wouldst not be deny'd,
But Brake the Bands of Love so lately ty'd.”

Stories of Betrayal.

A type of inscription quite eliminated from modern cemeteries, and noteworthy anywhere, are stories of betrayal, all too frequently followed by suicide. The rhymes in full are appended from an extraordinary example at Bulwell, over Mary Marrott, 1780, aged 24, whereon the betrayer's name is actually advertised to posterity in capitals:

“ Here Polly rests (whose exit gave surprise),
In hopes with heavenly Joy again to rise ;
She in the zenith of her youthful bloom,
Thro *Love* was brought to y^s tremendous Tomb.
The ruthless Youth was STOUT and insincere,
Thwarted her hopes and drove her to despair

What can atone (ah ! ever injur'd Shade),
For love unpitied and a Heart betray'd.
Death ! only Death could ease a troubled mind,
To Him that gave it she her Soul resign'd ;
Therefore ye Maidens, drop for Polly's sake,
A Sympathetic tear and warning take."

It will be observed that the literary character of the foregoing lines rises far above some of the rustic compositions previously quoted, the fact being that it is partially adapted from Pope's *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*. The same remark applies to that which has the appearance of a parallel story recorded on the headstone of a young widow, Cassandra Robinson (daughter of the rector), in the same churchyard. It is stated that she died in 1792, at the age of 27, "torn in Pieces by cruel Oppression and wasted away with lingering Grief." The rhymes—which again include the extraordinary detail of the alleged evil-doer's name—refer to some

Churchyard

story concerning which one would like to know definite particulars :

“ Thanks (*Gentle Scot*) for all my Woes,
 And 'Thanks for this effectual Close,
 And cure of ev'ry ill :
 More cruelty cou'd none express,
 And I, (if thou hadst shown me less),
 Had felt thy Torture still.”

The two foregoing are probably the most noteworthy examples of epitaphs discovered by the present writer in the course of his explorations, and may be taken as types of those which yet remain unrecorded in many an obscure churchyard. Another so unique,

that it seems strange that
Additions to the local historians should
Local History. have been oblivious of it,
 was discovered in Barker Gate, over the
 grave of Isaac Alvey, 1806, who clearly
 figured as a champion in one of the several
 local disputations concerning the common-
 able lands, for the rhymes say :

“ Here lies a man whose character was just,
 One whom the Burgesses did put their trust ;
 He Plaintiff stood, a Virdict for them gain'd,
 That all their Common rights should free
 remain.” (etc.)

**Humour,
 Unconscious
 and
 Otherwise.**

There are, undoubtedly, many good things still to be found in graveyards—among which I have already hinted at unconscious humour. Not a bad example is that on a gravestone at Barker Gate placed to the memory of the two wives of John Whitworth, who died respectively in 1831 and 1842, as follows :

“ Reader behold this monumental stone,
 Was placed here to thee to make it known,
 They, whose remains in dust lie sleeping here,
 When living upon earth own cousins were.
 And, in succession, each became the wife
 Of the same husband, dear to him in life ;
 By death remov'd, he sees their face no more

Churchyard

Though quite resign'd, he does their loss
deplore.

Now here they rest, may they together rise,
And dwell with him in yonder happy skies."

I have never come across a pun in a churchyard inscription (if one may except the "Stout" allusion above), but the verse on the headstone in Greasley churchyard of Adam Nowell, 1758, scarcely could have been selected except as a play upon his first name :

" Ev'n as in Adam all must die,
And therefore find a Grave ;
Ev'n so in Christ shall live again,
Who mighty is to save."

In the same churchyard is to be seen the worst travesty of an epitaph I have met with yet, founded on what are among the most hackneyed of all graveyard rhymes, which occur, in a comparatively correct form, in the same churchyard, over William Harvey, 1756, thus :

“ Farewell vain World, I’ve had enough of thee,
And Valies’t not what thou Can’s’t Say of me ;
Thy Smiles I court not, nor thy frowns I fear,
My days are past, my head liest quiet here.
What faults you saw in me take Care to shun,
Look but at home, enough is to be done.”

The travesty occurs on a headstone to Phillis Robinson, dated as recently as 1866, and is exactly reproduced below. Its fearful and wonderful rendering possibly is due to the circumstance that it was chiselled from memory by an extremely illiterate man :

“ Farewell vain world I’ve had enough of the,
I doent value what thou can see of me ;
Thy frowns I quote not, thy smiles I fear not,
Look at home and theirs enough to be done.”

Another instance of unconscious humour is to be seen at Gillingham, co. Norfolk, on the grave of Hannah, widow of Richard Shaw. She died on 24th November, 1847, aged 88, and is buried in her husband’s grave, the tombstone on which records :

Churchyard

“Of Manners plain but Morals good
 Beneath this stone an honest woman
 Above the vain, above the proud
 Lies humble as was still her plan.”

In view of the fact that her husband was buried first in the same grave, and that consequently she lies above *him*, the third line of the above “verse” appears to have been chosen rather unhappily.

Enmity beyond the Grave.

Turning from associations of humour to the opposite extreme, it will be news to many that there existed a recognised epitaph (adapted from Pope) utilised by such as elected to carry enmity beyond the grave by reviling the deceased. This verse occurs at Sneinton, 1800, and at Greasley, over Flint Walker, 1840. In the latter instance, as copied below, it is so punctuated by capitals and italics as to remove all doubt as

to the bitter earnestness of the compiler of the inscription :

“ How lov’d, how *valu’d* once, avails thee not,
 To whom related, or by whom begot ;
 A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
 ’Tis all THOU art ! and all the PROUD
 shall be ! ”

**A Bachelor’s
 Tombstone.**

In the same interesting churchyard, an ivy-draped tomb bears a quaint inscription to “ ioseph bratt, bacheller,” 1710, aged 37, that might well have been reared by the ladies of his acquaintance, judging by the conclusion :

“ He lived desired and
 Dyed lamentted and wee
 Desire to be
 Contented.”

**Arrangement
 of Rhyming
 Epitaphs.**

The practice of ignoring the orthodox system of identifying the written with the poetic line survived later

than the above date. In Sneinton churchyard, a gravestone of 1726 displays this version of familiar rhymes :

“Spectators all that passeth by, As you
are now so once was I ; As I am now so must
thou be, Remember Death when the Grave
you see.”

And at Basford is to be seen this primitive quatrain, on a headstone dated 1730 :

“Short was his race
Long is his Rest we
Hope he is Amongst
The Blest.”

Here is, too, an example of rustic rhyming over John Devrill, 1717, aged 33, at Edwalton :

“The Lord Thought fitt he
Should not stay, And To Him
Selfe sintcht him Away.”

**Inscriptions to
Strangers.**

Among the numberless
types of epitaphs, one
which, for the present writer

at least, possesses a peculiar charm, is represented by the none too common old-time inscriptions to foreigners, often breathing a spirit of sympathy with the exile, and incidentally illustrating the then relative rarity of their advent. In St. Mary's churchyard, Nottingham, is a partially defaced 18th century headstone to "Mary Rozzell, a native of Ireland." In Edwinstone churchyard, a stone to Ann Bullivant, 1823, bears the lines :

"Entombed within this humble bed,
An hibernian woman rests her head ;
Few friends had she on Briton's Isle,
I hope that God will on her smile."

And at Brinsley, Notts., a headstone to "Joseph Fallow, a native of Switzerland," 1855, has the rhymes :

"A stranger from a foreign land,
Cut down by Death's relentless hand ;
No parent nigh the balm to pour,
Of comfort in his dying hour.

Churchyard

His fathers' God did there sustain,
 A Saviour's love did soothe his pain
 And we'll adore his holy name,
 Who in all climes is found the same."

Epitaphs on Soldiers.

Epitaphs on soldiers, too, are always interesting, although prose accounts of Crimean and Indian Mutiny veterans are too frequent for any object to be served by quoting them. One cannot, however, misunderstand the rhymes at Barker Gate on the stone to William Archer, 1791, as follows :

" Rest his dear Sword beneath his Head,
 Round him his faithful Arms shall stand ;
 Fix his bright Ensigns on his Bed,
 The Guards and Honours of our Land."

But, for an epitaph appropriate to a soldier, these lines over Johnson Marlow, 1829, at Greasley, would be difficult to beat :

“ Whilst I was young in wars I shed my blood,
Both for my King and for my Country's good ;
In older years my care was chief to be,
Soldier to him who shed his blood for me.”

**Masonic
Tombstones.**

At St. Mary's, Nottingham, a gravestone bearing the masonic emblem, has

the lines :

“ Beneath this stone there rests a man,
Who much admired the mason's plan ;
And thought his store was not the less
For succouring virtue in distress.”

Murder. More than twenty years ago I copied from a broken wooden cross (doubtless now destroyed) in Colwich churchyard, Notts., the following remains of a painted inscription, recording a notorious local tragedy : “ Near this Cross lie the bodies of Ann Saville and her three Children, Mary, Harriet, and Thomas S..... murdered by her husband and then Colwick Wood. Buried May 24th, 1844.”

Churchyard

Noteworthy epitaphs may be found on countless other subjects, beyond those already indicated. On the headstone of Joseph Gels-tharp, at Greasley, 1800, for instance, we are told that: "His Skill in Mechanics was excellent, and he was particularly famed for constructing and improving the Plough."

Even grief for the loss of young children is philosophically exchanged for congratulation on the Barker Gate stone to two of the Flewker offspring, 1801, "who, highly favoured by their God, were early permitted to exchange this vain transitory life for one of never-ending bliss and happiness."

Before concluding, I would point out that, if any especially quaint epitaph be found, a rubbing made with heel-ball (Ullathorne's special quality) on a thin tough paper is well worth the trouble involved.

As already remarked, the transcriber of inscriptions in any burial ground may reckon to a certainty on coming across many things very well worth recording. He may, indeed, find considerably better things than those here set down, the only merit claimed for which is that they are authentic and typical.

It is but fitting that the closing words should express my warmest thanks to the Cork Herald of Arms (Mr. Peirce Gun Mahony—one of the most active members of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland), and to the Honorary Secretary of the East Herts Archæological Society (Mr. W. B. Gerish) for their great courtesy in revising the proof-sheets of this small book. It would be difficult to find anywhere two more experienced and enthusiastic "Churchyard Scribes."

ALFRED STAPLETON.

39, Burford Road,
Nottingham.

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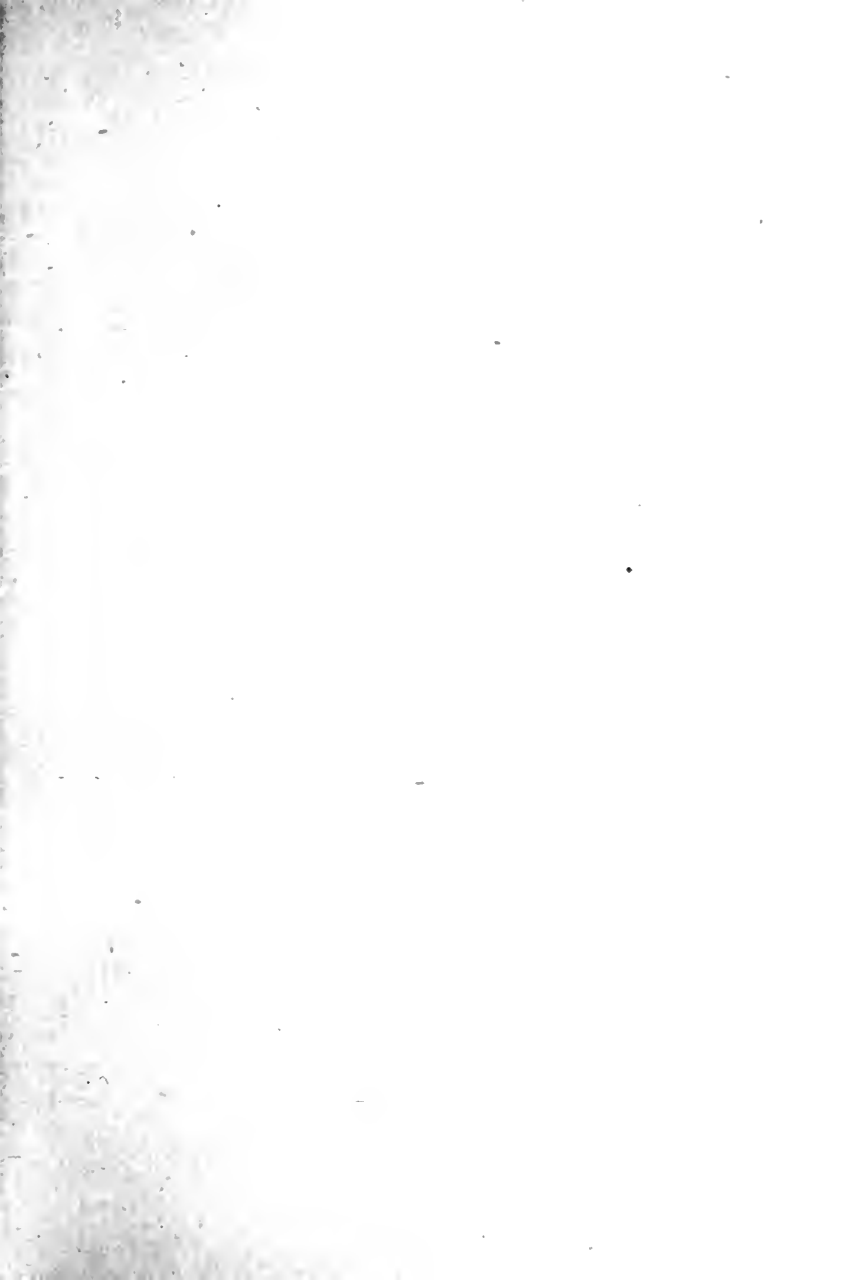
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